

Dear Dr. Abelson:

Your editorial "After the Lunar Manned Landing?" (SCIENCE, October 29) makes an excellent case for the moon, even though I question your statement that not even the sun has received more attention. The moon does not lure crowds of people to the beaches.

You comment that the manned space program has consisted of a series of great technological stunts, in which the "acrobatic team must constantly increase the complexity of its act to hold the audience's attention". Surely it would also be possible to say "achievements" instead of "stunts" and to point out that science as a whole rapidly increases in complexity!

Popular songs about the moon (SCIENCE 150:594 (1965)) clearly show that interest in the moon is reaching the vanishing point (Fig. 1). Mars (rhymes with stars, a favorite word of the librettists) is on the way up.* You have asked, "How many people know where Mars is, or even care?" May we always address our efforts to dispelling unawareness and insouciance wherever they exist!

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Fig. 1 Incidence of moon songs by decades,
1900 to 1965



* SOON WE'LL BE IN APOGEE

Mars shining up above you,
Oh, Voyager, the asteroids sure love you!
Phil Abelson is hoping to see
Just how sterile space can be!

Moon in the void behind us;
How can the tracking stations find us?
From gravity we're totally free
Rocket ship, and you, and me.

Van Allen belts are humming
We've left their active field!
And cosmic rays are coming
But they can't pierce our shield!

Canopus in position,
Shows we have left terrestrial conditions,
We're flying with a one-point-five G
Soon we'll be in apogee!

Melody: "Dream A Little Dream Of Me" ©